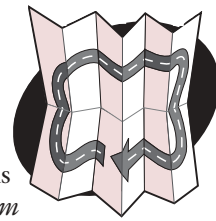


# Chapter Officers: The Driving Force of Your Program



Without exception, strong DECA chapters depend on a strong team of student officers. Not all chapters, however, elect/select officers in the same way, and the organization of tasks for the officers can be quite different from chapter to chapter. Below we are featuring an approach that has many traditional features while adding customized twists.

On the Web site ([www.deca.org](http://www.deca.org)) the Roadmap graphic leads you to a second method of choosing and training chapter officers. That system was devised by **Bill Lind** (formerly of Millard South High School) for a large chapter. But anyone can pick up excellent tips from his hybrid system of election and selection.

## Resources:

You will find a list of suggested officer positions and functions in the *Chapter Management System* (look for a revised version to be published this year). Also check the IMAGES resources *Guide for DECA Chapter Officers*, the *Leadership Handbooks* for officers, the *Parliamentary Procedure Reference Cards* and the inexpensive *Parliamentary Information Leaflets*. (See the stand-alone IMAGES catalog or the *DECA Guide*.) **As suggested below, send your officers to your state's leadership conference for added training.**

## Advice from the Field

**Sonja Weiler** at *Elk River High School* in Minnesota, now in her fifth year of teaching, took the traditional route into marketing education and DECA. She was a DECA member in high school and then studied marketing education in college. As a student teacher, she participated in helping a chapter member to run for national office successfully. So at the beginning of her professional career, Sonja learned a great deal about officer elections from her master teacher, **Dave Engstrom** (now at *Wasson H.S.* in Colorado). She took those lessons and molded them into her own system.

In the spring, DECA members at Elk River elect the first three chapter officers: president, vice president and historian. Why is historian such a key role? Because the historian will be in charge of the chapter's scrapbook, documenting chapter activity for submission into the Gold Chapter Award Program. The scrapbook is submitted at the state competitive events conference in the spring. At that point, the new officers will be free to start working on the next year's submission; therefore, they need a historian.

The spring election starts with a screening process. Each candidate must fill out an application and submit a transcript showing at least a 3.0 GPA. Candidates must have been a member for a year, must submit a résumé and must write a letter of intent stating why they want to be an officer and what their goals will be. Sonja duplicates all of these documents into a packet for each applicant. The packets are distributed to every voting DECA member, and they vote by ballot. At this point there are no speeches; people know the candidates and can read their letters of intent.

During the summer, this core leadership group meets to start planning. They get together for a day to learn about their responsibilities and to start to function as a team. Sonja does not dominate the process. She believes that the chapter officers run the chapter and finds that, with good training and a responsible selection process, the officers can run things. These three officers begin to put together the chapter's program of work.

In the fall, three more officers are elected. Sonja has delineated these positions as a sales leader, a promotions leader and a civic leader. Candidates for these positions can be new to

DECA. They will campaign by making three-minute speeches. The complete officer team then "fills in the blanks" in the program of work. Sonja asks that every month the chapter will have an activity related to each part of the DECA Diamond. Civic consciousness will find them going to a home for the elderly, running a food drive, etc. They will also conduct a social activity and a leadership development activity such as a classroom speaker or a trip to a conference for leadership training. Sonja believes that vocational understanding runs through all of the activities. Sales activities require more intense planning and execution than most activities, so the chapter will schedule a sales activity for every other month, starting with selling spirit shirts for homecoming.

Why label these offices as sales, promotions and civics? **Sonja finds a congruence between these functions and her curriculum.** Sales is fund-raising as taught in the curriculum; promotion is also a fundamental concept in marketing. This unusual designation for officers gives chapter activities an explicit curriculum tie-in.

The officer team meets once a week for a half hour before school. The president will have an agenda for the meeting. Sonja starts the session and will be there as a reference. At these meetings, the officers check on whether things are going well and decide what needs to be done to keep on track. They also plan the once-a-month chapter meeting.

When it comes time for her state's fall leadership conference, Sonja sends anyone who wants to go. For officers, this will be a time to gain more leadership training. For everyone else, the range of sessions provides a good introduction for all members. They can learn more about DECA, see what other projects they can be doing, start to explore events for competition, learn about professional dress, start to polish public-speaking skills, and much more. About half of the states/provinces hold fall leadership conferences. Find out if your state does, and take advantage of it. Introducing members to the wider world of DECA both teaches and inspires.

## Thank you

Thank you, Sonja Weiler and Bill Lind, for providing resources for this part of the DECA Roadmap. Outstanding advisors like you make DECA work for members!